



**U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

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# **NEWS RELEASE**

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Contact: Joint Information Center 402-996-3877

[mrjic@usace.army.mil](mailto:mrjic@usace.army.mil)

## **Col. Ruch: Upper Missouri dams safe, functioning, operating as designed**

**By Col. Robert J. Ruch  
Commander, Omaha District  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is engaged in an epic flood fight. For the last few months, we have focused on managing heavy inflows caused by record snowpack and rainfall in the Upper Missouri River basin. On May 1, the Corps projected summer releases of 57,500 cubic feet per second from Gavins Point Dam and were on schedule to evacuate the runoff from the record snowpack.

Then storms dumped eight inches of rain over Montana and North Dakota and changed the entire scenario. We will be managing these and subsequent inflows for the next several months as record runoff surges through the main stem system.

As Commander of the Omaha District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, I assure you that we make public safety our number one priority. We are also intensely focused on providing the public with timely, accurate and useable information.

In today's information age, we are confronted with reported assertions that are inaccurate and may induce fear and uncertainty without merit. Such assertions published and circulated in the past few weeks would have the public believe that the main stem dam system on the Upper Missouri could fail.

I disagree with those assertions.

I won't lend unproven assertions any credence by repeating them or analyzing them point by point. I do, however, want the public to know this:

The dams on the Upper Missouri – Fort Peck, (Mont.), Garrison Dam (N.D.), Oahe Dam, Big Bend Dam, and Fort Randall Dam (all S.D.) and Gavins Point (S.D./Neb.) -- are fully functional and operating as designed.

The system is protecting the public from unregulated flows. Unregulated flows – which

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**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Omaha District** 1616 Capitol Ave., Omaha, Neb. 68102

<http://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/>

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occur when flood waters flow uncontrolled in a spillway -- would result in significantly more damage. There is no evidence to suggest an emergency situation at any of our dams, and all projects are operating within their design parameters.

Public safety is paramount. As part of this responsibility, we long ago implemented a comprehensive dam safety program at each of our dams. We conduct daily, yearly and periodic (every 5 years) inspections, teaming with state dam safety agencies, Northwestern Division and other agencies to ensure the safety of these structures.

Our extensive instrumentation program allows us to closely monitor areas of interest such as seepage pressure and any minor movement. We've also re-evaluated seismic designs as the state of practice has evolved over recent decades. People need to remember that although our flood control storage is near capacity, dam functionality is not. There is no danger that any of our dams will be overtopped.

It is worth noting that all six dams have experienced similar pool levels several times over their service life. We make it standard operating procedure to increase the level of surveillance as water levels rise so that we can best manage the risks associated with dams of this size and importance. Our elevated surveillance on these dams has not revealed any significant issues or concerns regarding operation at these high pools and or record releases.

In closing, I have full confidence in the operational integrity of our main stem dams. Our dams are inspected and maintained on rigid schedules. Holding back volumes of water is what they were designed to do, and these structures have not only met but surpassed these expectations. We are respectful of these structures and pledge to remain vigilant to continually evaluate the performance and reliability of these projects into the future.

The Corps is 100 percent committed to this flood fight and we will continue to manage this record event on the river with public safety as our top priority. We will continue to use best engineering practices to manage the flood waters in the Missouri River main stem dam and reservoir system as the fight moves into summer.

Please call us if you have questions – our Joint Information Center number is 402-996-3877. You can also go to our website at <http://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/>

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